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J. M. Lawrence

THE MISSION CHAPEL.

A REPLY.

As a pamphlet* on behalf of the so-called Mission Chapel in the parish of Saint Paul, Portland, was printed at the time of the session of the Diocesan Synod in 1881, though not put in general circulation; and it is possible that the same, or a similar publication may be circulated at the present meetings of the Synod or the Church Society; or that information on the subject may be required; it seems fitting that some comments on the statements there made should be presented, and this will be briefly attempted in the following pages.

At the outset of the pamphlet in question, it is claimed that the Mission Chapel is to be "at once free, extra-parochial, vested in Trustees, and subject, ecclesiastically, only to the Bishop and Synod of the Diocese."

The writer of the pamphlet seems to have overlooked the circumstance that in St. John proper and Portland, the district to which a little later he especially refers, there were two free churches already—to the north, St. Mary's, built years since through the exertions of the Rector of the parish of St. Mark; and to the south, St. James, free since its reconstruction in 1878; nor has he noticed that a large section of the parish Church of St. Paul, as also of St. Luke's, Portland, is entirely free; or that the other City Churches are quite free at one Sunday and all week-day services; and attendants, whether regular or casual, welcomed to all these churches at all times.

*Mission Chapel. July, 1881. No publisher's name on title page.

Referring to the City of St. John, on the eastern side of the harbour, and the Town of Portland, the writer of the pamphlet states that "the population of the district named is over thirty thousand," while "the existing churches certainly do not furnish accommodation for more than four thousand," and finds in this a plea for the Chapel's erection. Here again he has quite overlooked the fact that of this population the Roman Catholics claim some 12,000, while the Baptist denominations provide for 5,500, and Presbyterians and Methodists each for nearly as many more. The Church of England population of the district in question is nominally 8,600,* and for these she has supplied six churches, several of large size, besides school buildings, which could be used on occasion. Nor has she even shewn herself backward, in proper connection with the several parishes, into which, for all purposes relating to the Church of England, this district has long been divided, to provide for all who can be gathered to her fold.

It seems but right to state these circumstances, as without the explanation, a serious reflection is cast on the already existing parochial organizations, which is quite undeserved.

An imputation, still less merited, is cast upon the Clergy of St. Paul's and the adjoining parishes, when the writer of this pamphlet, in another place, alleges that "in the locality in which the Mission Chapel is erected there is "work to be done among the poor, and the middle classes, "scarcely, as yet, attempted." A few hundred yards to the east lies the parish Church of St. Paul, served by a Rector and Curate, the discharge of whose duties has hitherto met with the full approval and commendation of the Bishop. At a like distance to the south lies the parish Church of St. John, served also by a Rector and Curate devoted to their work; and but a little further to the west is the parish Church of St. Luke, with its equally devoted Rector. Nor are these Clergymen without their parochial organizations, Sunday schools, bible classes, district visitors, and societies for the Church and for the poor. Of which of them is it to

* Of this number, probably one sixth, or 1400, at the least, are either not old enough to attend Church Services regularly, or incapacitated through sickness.

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be alleged that where work was to be done they have neglected the call, or rejected the helpers? And if such work can be carried on in connection with the already existing parochial organizations of the Church of England, where does the need arise for this so called "extra-parochial" Chapel?

All this the writer, in his eagerness to find a reason for its erection, seems to have quite overlooked. It is indeed a grave question whether, even if, in any instance, parish work be not carried on with all the energy and judgment which might be desired, it is expedient that the Rector's discretion should be interfered with, further than by the action of the Synod, or the Bishop's fatherly counsel and advice. But in the present case, no such dereliction of duty is, or can be, pretended. The question then is, broadly, whether it is desirable that there should grow up, within the parishes of the Church of England, extra-parochial organizations claiming some sort of connection with her, and yet independent of the Rector's local control. It is no new question to the student of ecclesiastical history. Such peculiar jurisdictions have arisen in some cases in the Mother Church, and it is no doubt to instances of this kind that the writer of the pamphlet refers, when, speaking of private or proprietary chapels, he says that "such chapels are common in England." It may be questioned, indeed, whether proprietary chapels are as common in the Mother Country as he supposes.* They can exist there only by prescription or by consent. They are looked upon as innovations, which it is not desirable to encourage.† And the law is now well ascertained that the Bishop cannot license any such chapel, if newly constructed, in the neighborhood of the parish Church, without the Rector's consent. Such a license, if issued, would, under the ecclesiastical law of England, be void.‡ And the difficulties to which services in unconsecrated

* See Phillimore, *Ecclesiastical Law*, vol 2, p. 1183.

† Cripps, *Laws of the Church and Clergy*, p. 465.

‡ Burn, *Eccles. Law*, Vol. 1, p. 306, a, b. Stephens, *Laws relating to the Clergy*, Vol. 1, p. 253. Phillimore's *Ecclesiastical Law*, Vol. 11, pp. 1181-4. See also as to the organized Dioceses of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, Hoffman's *Law of the Church*, pp. 230-31, *Ecclesiastical Law in New York*, pp. 34-5.

places gave rise were so great, that, as far back as 1342, they were restrained by canon of a Provincial Council held at London under Archbishop Stratford, which declared * that priests, both regular and secular, by celebrating Divine offices in private or unconsecrated places, caused "great danger to souls by drawing parishioners from their parish churches, and so depriving them of those wholesome instructions which they used there to receive."

Nor can it be alleged, with any greater approach to truth, that the parish limits, adopted by the Church of England in New Brunswick, exist but in name, and without use or object. The writer of the pamphlet boldly asserts that where several populous parishes lie contiguous within comparatively narrow limits "these lines disappear, the parish system breaks down, and, practically, congregationalism takes its place." And he refers to the residence of various Rectors, and officials of City Churches in adjoining parishes, adding that "the only Rector living in the parish of St. Paul is the Rector of Simonds." A very little thought should have taught him that he had entirely mistaken the scope and purpose of the parochial system. Non-residence, under proper restrictions, has long been allowed in England, without derogation to parochial rights. As well might he argue that the non-residence of the Aldermen of some City, within the limits of their several wards, abrogated their rights and powers, and authorized the erection of a peculiar jurisdiction for civil purposes in its midst, or base a like claim on the removal to its suburbs of some of those who, for purposes of business, continued to frequent its streets. The question is not one of residence, but of authority and jurisdiction.† As the Ecclesiastical Province is divided into dioceses, so has the Diocese been divided into parishes.‡ A parish is that circuit of ground which is committed to the charge of one parson, or vicar (with us called Rector) or other minister having cure of souls therein.§ And as the Rector of the parish has, so

* Lynd, pp. 233-4. Johnson, English Canons, part II, p. 360.

† See Stephens, Laws relating to the Clergy, V. 1, pp. 253-4.

‡ See Cripps, Laws of the Church and Clergy, p. 423.

§ Cripps, p. 424.

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far as the members of the Church of England are concerned, the same ecclesiastical rights out of his Church as in it, and is entitled to perform the service in every consecrated building in his parish;* so he has his responsibilities also. "It appears to me," says Mr. Justice Bayley,† "that if the vicar has the cure of souls coextensive with the whole limits of his parish, that casts a very serious and important duty upon him, and he has a right and is bound, as the *conservator parochie* to take care that no person shall deliver doctrine in that parish, except under his sanction and authority. It is said that the Bishop will never appoint an unfit person; but if the vicar has the cure of souls in the parish he has a right to act on his own judgment, and is not bound to trust to the judgment of the ordinary." It has been the wisdom of the Church of England to provide, not alone for the supervision of the Bishop in his diocese, but also for the care of the Rector over each parish. There is no interference with other religious bodies. His district visitors, to whom the parish is parcelled out (and the district system is probably more a need of populous, than of thinly peopled parishes) are sent among those of his own communion. His duty extends to the repressing of erroneous practices or teaching, only when in professed connection with the Church of England.

There may be some who would substitute a kind of "congregationalism" for this long tried system of ministration and control; claiming a liberty which must surely end in license. But is this wise? It is not well to abolish the ancient landmarks till we are sure we have found better. Let us hope that the day is far distant when the Church of England in New Brunswick will accept a "congregationalism" in the place of her present parochial system.

The suggestion of such a change implies indeed that a liberty or license is claimed for the Mission Chapel, of which the parochial system will not admit. And so its champion, after alleging that its promoters have been charged with being actuated wholly by selfish desire for "services of a

* Cripps, p. 164.

† Farnworth vs. Bishop of Chester, 4 B and C. 570. Cripps, pp. 166-7.

certain kind" which could not otherwise be obtained, repudiates the charge "in this form," but adds that they are very decidedly of opinion that in some points the services of the Church might be so rendered as to make them more attractive, as by "the freer use of music," the "restoration of the Holy Eucharist to the place of honour it should, but does not occupy," and "by other means;" and in another place, after stating that it had been objected to the Chapel "that the ritual contemplated is likely to be extreme;" he replies (writing of course before it was completed) that it seems enough to say that this is an assumption quite incapable of proof.

As the Chapel has since been opened this can no longer be asserted. Its services now speak for themselves. It would however occupy too much space to refer to them in detail. It will be enough here to say that they are commonly reported to be in advance of the Ritual of the Cathedral of the Diocese; and it will hardly be denied that uses or practices have been adopted in the Mission Chapel, which have heretofore been unusual in the services of the Church of England in New Brunswick, and which are in conflict with the decisions of the English Courts.

Nor can such practices be justified by diversity of ritual elsewhere, within or without the limits of the Diocese. If such exists, as the writer of the pamphlet asserts to be the case, it is the part of a loyal churchman to aid, not by precept only, but by example, in its removal. One wrong cannot justify another. The responsibility of those who cause divisions is very great. Past services to the Church on the part of some of the promoters of the Mission Chapel are pleaded by the writer of the pamphlet on their behalf. Let all such services be fully recognized. But surely no personal services of any layman or laymen can justify those who may have given time and talent for the Church's work, in asking the Church of England to depart from her established laws.

Liberality, again, or, as it is called, munificence, on the part of those connected with the Mission Chapel, may be brought forward as a plea on their behalf. But liberality or munificence is largely a question of means. The widow's

obtained, reputed that they are the services of them more restoration of it should, but and in another to the Chapel extreme;" he deleted) that it on quite incapable no longer be ves. It would them in detail. commonly re- e Cathedral of t uses or practice, which have the Church of in conflict with

And yet again it may be claimed that the withdrawal from their Parish Churches of the adherents of the Mission Chapel, has not as yet materially affected those Churches, financially or otherwise. Perhaps it has not, yet their growth would hardly have been impeded by a fuller and heartier support. It may well indeed be doubted whether it would not have been a truer munificence to expend the large donation from which chiefly it is understood the Chapel has been built, in assisting the struggling country Missions, and the ill paid Missionaries who supply, so far as their strength will admit, their more pressing needs.

But lastly, it is claimed by the writer on behalf of the Mission Chapel, that it is simply "a proprietary Chapel, which, being erected upon private property, it is purposed to vest in Trustees and offer to the Church upon certain conditions, to be approved by the Bishop, and for which no parochial rights are claimed." It has been stated that no such Chapel can now exist in any parish in England except by prescriptive right or by consent of the incumbent and patron, neither of which claims can be put forward in the present instance. "If chapels can be erected and ministers be placed in them at the nomination of others, not only will it deprive the incumbent of the means of directing the spiritual instruction of his parishioners, which has been entrusted to him, and which he has solemnly undertaken; not only will it produce schisms and dissensions, and thereby exert an injurious influence upon the religious principles of the parish, but it must almost necessarily affect, in some degree, the emoluments of the benefice, as well as the pastoral duties of the incumbent."*

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*Sir John Nichol in *Bliss vs. Woods*, 3 Hagg, 509. Stephens, *Laws of Church and Clergy*, v. 1, pp. 253-4.

Suppose, however, the consent were given. There still remain to be considered the "certain conditions" upon which the Chapel is to be offered to the Church.

The title of the property is vested, subject to two mortgages, in five Trustees, as joint tenants. No declaration of trust appears upon the County Records with the deed; no document to shew for what trusts or purposes the property is held. What, then, are these conditions? If they are simply that the services are to be those of the Church of England, why this "extra-parochial organization? If they are such as could, by any possibility veil the introduction within her fold of practices she has renounced and forbidden, would it not indeed be matter for regret if such practices should thus secure a foothold within her borders?

*Registered Libro 6 p. 59, 1st April, 1882.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

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